

JOHN ROLFE PLANNING AREA

JOHN ROLFE Planning Area

PLANNING AREA PROFILE:

Location

The John Rolfe Planning Area is located in the northeastern portion of the Town of Smithfield. It is bounded on the north by the River Residential Planning Area and its three stable neighborhoods: Red Point Heights, Pagan Point and the northern half of the Moonefield subdivision, on the west by South Church Street, on the south by Battery Park Road and on the east by Moone Creek. The Planning Area consists of approximately 318 acres.

Existing Land Use and Transportation System

The John Rolfe Planning Area is a rapidly developing area which includes an array of residential uses bordered by a mix of corridor-based commercial, industrial and office/service uses. Its most notable existing uses include the Riverside Convalescence Center, the southern half of the Moonefield Plantation subdivision, the Moone Plantation and Croatan Landing single family residential subdivisions and the Smithfield Baptist Church. The Planning Area has witnessed a substantial amount of residential development since the 1992 Plan was adopted.

The major roads serving the Planning Area are John Rolfe Drive, South Church Street and Battery Park Road. Each of the three most developable properties in the Planning Area (as depicted by the three Sub-Areas analyzed in more detail later in this Planning Area profile) are directly adjacent to John Rolfe Drive and would rely principally upon this collector road for primary access into and out of future developments located therein. Projected growth in these Sub-Areas will only exacerbate the existing traffic problems plaguing John Rolfe Drive and Moonefield Drive and the John Rolfe/Battery Park Road intersection. The traffic impacts associated with future development in these Sub-Areas underscore the importance of the transportation improvements recommended for John Rolfe Drive and the impacted intersections in the Planning Area. These recommended improvements are outlined in more detail in the Transportation Plan (see Chapter X).

Existing Environmental Considerations

The Planning Area's remaining development potential is constrained by the presence of Moone Creek along its eastern boundary. The scenic marshlands and associated wetlands of the creek penetrate the Planning Area just north of the Moone Plantation subdivision and effectively prohibits the development of a substantial portion of the undeveloped land in the area. Nearly 34 percent of the total Planning Area, approximately 105 acres, have topographic and wetland characteristics which make them unsuitable for urban development. While these tidal waterways and marshlands limit the total buildable area, they provide dramatic siting opportunities from the adjacent ridges. Just over 20 percent (approximately 65 acres) of the Planning Area's 318 total acres have been identified as having prime development potential.

JOHN ROLFE LAND USE PLAN

The John Rolfe Planning Area is planned as a mixed-use community incorporating a range of housing options in addition to light industrial and public uses and commercial and residential/office transitional redevelopment along South Church Street and Battery Park Road. The future development and redevelopment of the Area should occur under the guidance of a master plan for each Planning Sub-Area and Redevelopment Area, as opposed to the parcel-by-parcel approach that has historically dominated Town development along its major corridors. This parcel-by-parcel development pattern has contributed to the proliferation of a mishmash of various uses along South Church Street that fail to link together in any sound urban context, thereby threatening the stability of the corridor. By creating a long range plan, the owners of the various properties within each Sub-Area and Redevelopment Area would be able to produce a better product that would appropriately respond to the existing, stable residential neighborhoods in the Planning Area.

In the following sections, specific land use recommendations are presented for each of the three Sub-Areas and for the two Redevelopment Areas identified in the John Rolfe Planning Area.

Sub-Areas 1 and 2 Recommendations

Sub-Area 1 is located in the western portion of the John Rolfe Planning Area. It is bounded on the west by Redevelopment Area 1, on the south by Redevelopment Area 2 and vacant land adjacent to the Croatan Landing subdivision, on the east by John Rolfe Drive and on the north by a series of single family detached homes located on Lumar Road. The Sub-Area is planned for multi-family residential/retirement housing use, focusing entirely upon the development of housing for the elderly. Under normal circumstances, the multi-family residential/retirement housing land use designation allows for development densities up to but not exceeding 12 dwelling units per acre. However, in order to promote retirement housing development in Smithfield, elderly housing proposals may be granted higher densities (up to 20 units per acre) subject to superior design proposals. Assuming this higher density allowance may be achieved on the site, Sub-Area 1 could potentially yield between 263 and 350 retirement dwelling units within its 17.5 net developable acres.

Sub-Area 2 is located in the central portion of the John Rolfe Planning Area and is home to the existing Riverside Convalescence Center. It is bounded on the west by John Rolfe Drive, on the south by vacant, wooded land, on the east by a tributary of Moone Creek and north by Lumar Road. Encompassing just under 27 acres, Sub-Area 2 constitutes the largest undeveloped property in the Planning Area. It is planned for multi-family residential/retirement housing use, and just as is the case with Sub-Area 1, it is recommended that the future development of the Sub-Area be devoted entirely to elderly housing opportunities. It is envisioned that the remaining undeveloped land in the Sub-Area provides a logical expansion area for the existing convalescence center. Under this land use designation, between 54 and 72 additional retirement units could potentially be located within the Sub-Area's 3.6 remaining net developable acres.

The major issues involved with the potential development of this Sub-Areas are (1) the promotion of retirement housing/elderly assisted living opportunities, (2) ensuring that future development represents

the highest and best possible use of the site, (3) vehicular access and (4) sensitive environmental areas. Due to its location, size and topography, Sub-Area 1 is perceived as one of the most significant undeveloped properties remaining within the old Town limits. Its adjacency to both the Town's primary commercial corridor and existing stable residential areas and its accessibility have long established the site as a sought-after property for future development. However, the property has been held by the same landowner for several years, and the landowner has no immediate plans to develop the property. Given the recognized importance of this valuable piece of undeveloped property to the Town and the landowner's willingness to conserve the property in its present state for the time being, it is hoped that the Town Council will support the property owner in an attempt to identify the highest and best use and ultimately, an appropriate end user for the site. With this in mind, it is recommended that the determination of the highest and best use for the property include the consideration of not only market factors and land rents, but also impacts on local land uses, transportation, utilities, the environment and the local housing market.

An initial, cursory analysis of these and other issues has led the Town to identify retirement/elderly assisted living development as the highest and best use for both Sub-Area 1 and Sub-Area 2. A growing need for this type of housing product has been voiced throughout the development of this Plan. In particular, respondents to the citizen survey conducted in the early stages of the comprehensive planning process were strongly in favor of providing additional retirement and assisted living opportunities in the area. As a result of the strong public support of this provision, the Town has included it as one of its principle goals in the 1999 Comprehensive Plan. After an exhaustive review of developable properties in the Town, the undeveloped land in Sub-Areas 1 and 2 were identified as the most suitable sites for fulfilling this major Plan goal.

The multi-family residential/retirement housing land use designation has been applied to these Sub-Areas with the condition that traditional multi-family uses, such as garden apartments will not be permitted. Given the large amount of existing multi-family housing within the Town limits, no new high density residential development is being considered for the 1999 Comprehensive Plan Update. The Town is confident that it currently has a sufficient supply of multi-family dwelling units to meet its regional fair share of projected demand in the near planning term. Furthermore, it is clearly understood that generally, retirement/assisted living residential uses contribute a much more favorable fiscal impact to a community than do traditional multi-family uses. It is anticipated that the elderly housing units will serve as a significant tax revenue generator for the Town without draining large levels of important community resources--ie. increased education spending, police protection, etc. as is commonly associated with apartment uses. Furthermore, the Town's allowance for increased density levels for elderly housing uses will also allow this type of use to exceed the revenue potential of a traditional apartment community.

A thoughtful master plan should be created for the Sub-Area which provides for shared vehicular entrances and efficient internal street systems, protection of its scenic surroundings, sensitive ecology and Moone Creek which forms the eastern border of the Planning Area. Access points into and out of each Sub-Area should be limited along South Church Street, John Rolfe Drive and Lumar Road in order to prohibit the further proliferation of curb cuts and the associated traffic bottlenecks along these roadways. Future development should be sited within the areas which are most conducive for urban land uses, while the fragile environmental areas along the northeast boundary of Sub-Area 2 are to be maintained as permanent open space. Any urban use of these "sensitive environmental areas" (situated outside the Sub-Area) should be avoided.

The future development of Sub-Area 1 should be responsive to the existing, adjacent residential uses by incorporating landscape buffers and sufficient setbacks into its final design. Development in Sub-Area 2 should be equally respectful of the existing Riverside Convalescence Center. In the best case scenario, Sub-Area 2 would simply serve as an expansion of the existing facility completed with consistent building design strategies and materials. In order to minimize the future traffic impact of the uses planned for these Sub-Areas, entrances should be efficiently located and designed as part of a master planned internal street system. Access to Sub-Area 1 should be limited to one entrance each on both South Church Street (via the adjacent vacant lot) and John Rolfe Drive. Access to Sub-Area 2 should be limited to a single entrance on John Rolfe Drive and a shared entrance with the Riverside Convalescence Center on Lumar Road.

Sub-Area 3 Recommendations

Located in the southwestern portion of the John Rolfe Planning Area, Sub-Area 3 is comprised of the undeveloped balance of the Croatan Landing subdivision. It is bounded on the north by the existing phases of the Croatan Landing subdivision, on the west by John Rolfe Drive, on the south by an existing light industrial use and on the east by the Moone Plantation subdivision. Sub-Area 3 contains 12 total acres, of which only approximately 3.2 are identified as most developable. The Sub-Area is planned for attached residential use at a density of six to eight dwelling units per net developable acre. An additional phase of the Croatan Landing subdivision has been approved by the Town for development and officially platted within the Sub-Area. This additional phase has been approved for the development of 53 new townhouse units.

The major issues involved with the future development of this Sub-Area are (1) the addition of sidewalks, (2) vehicular access and (3) buffering. Currently, no sidewalks exist within the Planning Area. However, the Town's recommended sidewalk plan (as described in more detail in the Transportation chapter of this Plan) calls for the addition of a sidewalk along John Rolfe Drive to link the neighborhoods within the John Rolfe Planning Area and the River Residential Planning Area together and to provide pedestrian access to the nearby commercial uses on South Church Street. Therefore, the future development of Sub-Area 3 should incorporate the construction of a sidewalk along John Rolfe Drive in order to fit into the overall Town sidewalk plan.

The southern portion of John Rolfe Drive currently suffers from traffic congestion during peak demand hours, particularly in the vicinity of the Battery Park intersection. The Town is especially concerned with the additional demands placed upon this segment of the road once the Planning Area reaches full development. Part of this concern could be alleviated if VDOT were to approve the Town's request to improve Quarterfield Drive as an alternative path between South Church Street and John Rolfe Drive. However, even if this recommended improvement is eventually approved, it is recommended that the number of entrances into Sub-Area 3 from John Rolfe Drive be limited in order to minimize the number of additional vehicular entrance and exit movements associated with the project along the connector road. Thus, the new townhouse development should incorporate a single entrance off John Rolfe Drive leading to an internal street network which efficiently serves the parking areas for the dwelling units.

Another important consideration for the future development of this Sub-Areas is the need for mature landscaping to provide a buffer between the planned townhouses and the adjacent light industrial use to the south. The site plan for the new phase of the Croatan project should include sufficient setbacks and landscape buffers, as provided for in the revised Zoning Ordinance, to minimize the impact of light, noise, dust, smoke or any other externality from the adjacent uses on the new townhouses.

Redevelopment Area Recommendations

Redevelopment Area 1 is located in the northwestern portion of the Planning Area and incorporates a mix of residential, office and service uses. It is bounded on the north by single family detached residences located along Lumar Road, on the west by South Church Street, on the south by Redevelopment Area 2 and on the east by Sub-Area 1. The Redevelopment Area borders South Church Street between Red Point Drive and the vacant lot adjacent to Sub-Area 1, covering approximately 6.7 acres. It is planned for residential-office transitional redevelopment with an allowable floor area ratio density of between 0.20 and 0.30. Based upon the existing development pattern and building area coverages in the Redevelopment Area, it is projected that future redevelopment will effectively gain no new net developable area in terms of estimated land yields. However, it is anticipated that the redeveloped uses will improve general property values in the area and will provide a much more suitable entrance impression for those traveling along South Church Street towards the Cypress Creek bridge.

Redevelopment Area 2 is located in the southwestern portion of the John Rolfe Planning Area and is comprised of a poorly connected mix of retail, personal service, medical, automobile dealerships and service and residential uses. It is bounded on the north by Redevelopment Area 1, on the west by South Church Street, on the south by Battery Park Road and on the east by the Moone Plantation subdivision. Redevelopment Area 2 extends from the southern boundary of Redevelopment Area 1 (marked by the vacant lot adjacent to Sub-Area 1) and borders both South Church Street and Battery Park Road, each of which function as an important corridor leading into Downtown Smithfield. The Redevelopment Area contains approximately 30 acres and is planned for retail commercial redevelopment. Just as is the case with Redevelopment Area 1, it is projected that the future redevelopment of the assorted uses along the corridors will not lead to any effectively net gain of developable area in terms of estimated land yields given existing lot coverage patterns.

The various existing uses in these Redevelopment Areas currently do not represent the highest and best use of the properties. The lot-by-lot development of these Areas over time has led to a haphazard collection of land uses that do not fit together in a coherent mix of uses or capture a significant portion of the local or regional commercial marketplace. The end result is a corridor that does not

The major issues involved with the potential redevelopment of these Areas are (1) improving Quarterfield Road, (2) implementing entrance corridor guidelines and gateway improvements, (3) acquiring and consolidating the properties within the Redevelopment Area, (4) removing and/or renovating the existing structures and (5) vehicular access. Quarterfield Drive is an unpaved road connecting South Church Street and John Rolfe Drive. This unused right-of-way represents an untapped transportation resource that could be used to help alleviate the existing thru-traffic pressure impacting John Rolfe Drive and Battery Park Road. As explained in greater detail in the Transportation Chapter (see Chapter X), it is recommended that Quarterfield Drive be paved and incorporated into the Town's transportation network as soon as VDOT allows. The improvement of Quarterfield Drive will provide an alternative to the busy South Church Street/Battery Park Road intersection for residents of the River Residential and John Rolfe Planning Areas or others traveling into Town from Battery Park Road. It is recommended that this improvement plan include the allowance of only "right-in/right-out" turning movements at its intersection with South Church Street.

Together with the assorted existing uses found in Redevelopment Area 1 in the Pagan Pines Planning Area, the mix of uses found in these Redevelopment Areas forms the principle entrance corridors into the Town from the south and east. Unfortunately, in its present state, these uses provide a less than optimal entrance statement for those entering Smithfield. These corridors are lacking any true "gateway" or true sense of beginning and arrival for travel in both directions. The major entrances to the Town should be articulated and clearly defined, offering a clear message that one is entering Smithfield. The perceived entrance to the Town should be defined by physical features rather than strict adherence to political boundaries marked by a simple incorporation sign as is presently the case. Within the context of the recommended redevelopment of these areas, the opportunity exists to more accurately relay the "Smithfield image" to both tourists and residents alike, without sacrificing the rural and historical backdrop that makes the Town so special. The redevelopment process should support the Town's ongoing effort to upgrade corridor roadway capacities and pedestrian connections, while simultaneously helping local merchants and businesses to provide adequate access to their commercial or service establishments. The Town's new, formal corridor design guidelines should establish consistent landscaping and signage standards that apply consistently across each corridor and establish feasible strategies and timetables for compliance among existing businesses and landowners located along the corridor.

As a part of its expanded economic development function, the Town could initiate discussions with the property owners in each Redevelopment Area in an attempt to clarify the redevelopment potential of the properties. If the current owners show no interest in redeveloping the properties on their own, the Town could explore the possibilities of acquiring the properties and consolidating them into one contiguous parcel within the Redevelopment Area that could be marketed to a commercial developer. The Town

should also approach the existing businesses located within the Redevelopment Area and encourage them to participate in the redevelopment process. The Town could also explore the potential for implementing a tax increment financing program within the Redevelopment Areas to aid in creating momentum for the proposed redevelopment of the specified portions of the corridors.

Future redevelopment should minimize the number of entrances along South Church Street. Future commercial uses should use shared entrances wherever possible, and parking setbacks should be increased to at least twenty feet in order to provide additional room for landscaping and screening. Parking should be restricted between the building and the roadway for new and redeveloped sites. Furthermore, should existing structures be replaced by new structures (as is anticipated), these new buildings should be placed at an appropriate setback distance from the road. Suitable land uses for the redevelopment effort would include: professional offices, tourist commercial and neighborhood retail commercial uses (including restaurants and possibly small motels if feasible).

FUTURE LAND USE SUMMARY

The Comprehensive Plan projects the John Rolfe Planning Area as an integrated, mixed-use community which will provide several opportunities to meet the Town's long term planning objectives with respect to providing additional assisted living and retirement housing opportunities, while also providing a suitable transition from its mix of highway related commercial, industrial and office/transitional uses along South Church Street and Battery Park Road to the existing residential uses in the balance of the Planning Area. The plan for this Area also calls for the support of extensive redevelopment along South Church Street and Battery Park Road in order to refine these major entrance corridors. The ultimate goal is to create a more positive entrance statement along these corridors by introducing landscaping and setback guidelines, establishing a more dynamic commercial center and constructing a pedestrian-friendly sidewalk system that links the corridor uses to adjacent neighborhoods.

The John Rolfe Planning Area has the potential to accommodate approximately 53 additional townhouse units and between approximately 260 and 350 new elderly assisted living dwelling units. The table on the following page summarizes the development potential of each of the Sub-Areas and Redevelopment Areas as recognized in the Plan.

FUTURE LAND USE PLAN
JOHN ROLFE PLANNING AREA

Sub-Area	Sub-Area Acreage	Net Developable Acreage	Recommended Use	Density	Net Yield	
1	26.3	17.5	Multi-Family Residential/ Retirement Housing	15-20	263 - 350	du
2	26.6	3.6	Multi-Family Residential/ Retirement Housing	15-20	54 - 72	du
3	12.0	3.4	Attached Residential	6-8	53 - 53*	du
Sub-Area Total	64.9	24.5	Estimated Totals: Attached Residential Multi-Family Residential/ Retirement Housing		53 - 53* 317 - 422	du du
Redevelopment Area						
1	6.7	0	Residential-Office Transitional	0.20-0.30	0 - 0	sf
2	30.3	0	Retail Commercial	0.20-0.50	0 - 0	sf
Redevelopment Area Total	37.0	0	Estimated Totals: Retail Commercial Residential-Office Transitional		0 - 0 0 - 0	sf sf
Sensitive Environmental Areas	104.6					
Existing Urban Stable Areas	178.9					
Planning Area Total	318.2	24.5	Estimated Totals: Attached Residential Multi-Family Residential/ Retirement Housing		53 - 53* 317 - 422	du du

* Based upon existing platted lot yield in S.A. 3

